THE INFLUENCE OF MILTON AND WORDSWORTH ON THE EARLY VICTORIAN SONNET

A Portion of

THE SONNET IN ENGLISH LITERATURE 1800-1850

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1938

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM SANDERLIN

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THESIS SUMMARY

In tracing the history of the sonnet from 1800 to 1850, the author has discussed such features as the popularity of the sonnet, its critical repute, its subject matter, its form, and its influences. His conclusions follow.

Popularity: The number of sonnets written increased steadily in the 1800-1850 period. This does not indicate a gain in popularity, for more literature was produced in this period than earlier, but it does show that the sonnet held the popularity it had won at the end of the eighteenth century. There were as many sonnets published in periodicals from 1800 to 1830 as just before 1800, and sonnets are fairly numerous in early nineteenth century commonplace books. After 1830 fewer examples appeared in periodicals.

Critical Repute: The sonnet after 1812 won the regard of the critics, who had before attacked it. Study of Italian sonnets and the admiration aroused by Wordsworth's work in the form caused the change in attitude. Sonnet anthologies were better edited. Many important poets writing before 1812 did not use the form, but hardly a major writer after that time failed to compose a few examples.

Subject Matter: Carrying on the popular eighteenth-century strain of melancholy, sonneteers early in the century wrote chiefly of their own sorrows. Then, around 1820, nature description predominated. At this same time Leigh Hunt and his circle wrote a number of occasional sonnets, poems on literary subjects or epistolary verse. After 1828 came a flood of religious sonnets. Nature description remained popular, and didactic themes appeared more frequently.

Form: The trend toward irregular structure which had set in from 1790 to 1800 was reversed at the very beginning of the century; the legitimate form predominated throughout the fifty year period. After 1830 the finer points of the legitimate form were more clearly brought out. Few writers or critics championed the Shakespearean structure. The irregular rime schemes of the early nineteenth-century sentimental poets were, however, defended by certain critics against the legitimate form.

Influences: The influence of sentimental eighteenth-century sonnets was strongest early in the nineteenth century but is found as late as 1850. Widespread translation of Italian sonnets and editing not only of sonnets but of critical treatises from Italian sources led to better knowledge of sonnet structure than most English writers had possessed before the nineteenth century. Elizabethan influence, most powerful around 1820, affected mainly style and diction. Wordsworth and Milton had an important effect on the Victorian sonnets.

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THE INFLUENCE OF MILTON AND WORDSWORTH ON THE EARLY VICTORIAN SONNET

By George Sanderlin

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century Italian and Elizabethan influences came to play an important part in the history of the English sonnet.[1] Milton's work, which had been the chief inspiration of eighteenth century writers, was no longer the only standard.[2] It might have continued its gradual

[1] Evidence of Italian influence is furnished by the number of translations or Italian poems printed in the sonnet anthologies (more sonnets by Petrarch than by any English writer are included in George Henderson's *Petrarca,* London, 1803, and Italian sonneteers outnumber the English in Capel Lofft's *Laura,* London, 1814); by the introduction of critical canons from Italian sources (cf. references to Italian authorities in Lofft's introduction, in the *Monthly Mirror* n. s. 7 (1810). 98, and the English editions or extracts of Italian treatises, such as the section from Ceva's *Scelta di sonetti con varie critiche osservazioni,* Torino, 1735, published in T. J. Mathias' *Aggiunta ai componimenti lirici,* London, 1808); by the editions and translations of Petrarch and other Italian sonneteers (see Roderick Marshall, *Italy in English Literature 1755-1815,* New York, 1934, pp. 323 ff., on the revival of Italian lyric poetry 1795-1811); and by the gains of the legitimate rime scheme (defining as legitimate sonnets with two-rime octaves, the octaves falling into quatrains riming *abab, abba, baba,* or *baab*—thanks to Lofft, Nott, and other translators, over half of 1188 sonnets examined for 1800-1812 have such schemes, whereas these patterns are shown to have declined in number between 1790 and 1800 in R. D. Havens' *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry,* Cambridge, Mass., 1922, p. 523). Most of the sentimental sonneteers of 1800-1812 imitated, translated, or referred to Petrarch. After 1812 many sonnets show Elizabethan influence in style (especially those of Lord Thurlow, J. H. Reynolds, Beddoes, Hood, and Keats), while Elizabethan sonneteers gained in esteem (cf. the praise of Shakespeare by Boswell, Boswell's Malone, London, 1821, 20. 222 and 363, and by Drake in *Shakespeare and His Times,* London, 1817, 2. 74-86, and Lamb's praise of Sidney, *London Magazine* 8 (1823). 248-52, with Henderson's condemnation of Elizabethan sonnets, *Petrarca,* pp. vii-viii, and Charles Symmons' preference for Drummond over Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare in his *Life of John Milton,* London, 1810, p. 271 and note). For the small part played by Italian and Elizabethan examples in the eighteenth century sonnet, see R. D. Havens, *Influence of Milton,* pp. 480-2, 485-6. In this essay I am attempting to extend the detailed history of the genre which Professor Havens wrote for the period 1660-1800.

[2] Two points may be made about the position of Milton's sonnets before 1828:

1. In general they retained the high esteem gained in the eighteenth century. Jeffreys, grudgingly praising Wordsworth in the *Edinburgh Review* 11 (1807). 230, said: "All English writers of sonnets have imitated Milton; and, in this way, Mr. Wordsworth, when he writes sonnets, escapes again from the trammels of his own unfortunate system; and the consequence is, that his sonnets are as much superior to the greater part of his other poems, as Milton's sonnets are superior to his." The *Critical Review* 3d ser., 6 (1805). 37, liked their "boldness and masculine

decline in influence but for one poet—Wordsworth. Thanks to his great achievements in the form, the serious, dignified, Miltonic type of sonnet became popular again. From 1828-50 the sonnets of Milton and Wordsworth were those most highly re-

strength." Capel Lofft was an almost fanatical student of the Italian sonnet, but in his critical introduction to *Laura* he noted that "if the SONNET encourages occasional *Inversion*, this to be a blemish must become so by the injudicious or the unskilful use of it. It agrees well in its occasional use with the *Dignity* of the SONNET" (I. excvii), and that, although the form had been used satirically, "only in the highest Order of the Satyric the expression of moral and dignified Indignation appears to accord with the Tone and Character of the Sonnet" (I. lv). In his own sonnets he resembles Milton at least as much as the Italians: thirty-four of his one hundred and seventeen original sonnets are addressed to persons, living or dead (a favorite Miltonic type in the eighteenth century), seventeen of these beginning with vocatives; and forty of his original sonnets, nearly all of which are legitimate, omit the pause at the end of the octave. Minor critics like Charles Symmons (see his *Life of John Milton*, London, 1810, p. 272), major critics like Hazlitt and Macaulay, all considered Milton's work unsurpassed. "The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy," said Macaulay, applying to them the customary adjective "majestic" (Macaulay, "Milton," *Edinburgh Review* 42 (1825). 324—cf. Hazlitt's "Milton's Sonnets"). The *Retrospective Review*, 7 (1823). 393, in an article championing Shakespeare's *Lucrece* and *Sonnets*, came to the conclusion that "The best writer of English Sonnets is . . . Milton."

2. But there were some dissenting from the common view—particularly critics who enjoyed the sentimental sonnet. Miltonic influence was impaired in the first quarter of the nineteenth century by the wave of sentimentalism that engulfed the sonnet from 1795 to 1812 and by the popularity of the descriptive sonnet thereafter; and the first force affected the reputation of Milton's sonnets. Henderson, a champion of the elegiac (i. e. Shakespearean) measure over the legitimate qualified his praise of Milton: "Many of the Sonnets of MILTON are certainly very beautiful; and they almost all claim the excellence of being composed, strictly after the manner of the Italian. It may nevertheless be discovered, that this restraint has frequently occasioned them to want that which all but critical readers will chiefly require, melody and softness of versification" (*Petrarca*, p. xxiii). Kirke White, arguing that "There is no species of poetry which is better adapted to the taste of a melancholy man than the sonnet," said that of Milton's "Those to the Nightingale and to Mr. Lawrence are . . . alone entitled to the praise of *mediocrity*" ("Melancholy Hours, No. 5," *Remains* ed. Southey, London, 1808, 2. 249. 244). The strength of this sentimental conception of the form is shown by its continuance after 1812, as in an article in the *Déjeuné* for 1820. Cf. Stagg's reason for translating certain Italian sonnets: "As I had never met with an English version of this work, and, as many of the Sonnets contain, a good deal of sentimentality, I thought a translation into our own language, would not be unacceptable to the admirers of this species of composition" (John Stagg, *The Cumbrian Minstrel*, Manchester, 1821, 2. 138). Critics favoring this type of sonnet must often have opposed the Miltonic, which was legitimate and the antithesis of sentimental, even when they did not express their opposition. These critics disappeared as the sentimental sonnet ceased to be written; the Miltonic type was given new life by Wordsworth's work and enjoyed, as we shall see, great popularity from 1828 to 1850.

spected and most imitated by English writers. Elizabethan and Italian influences continued, affecting strongly the Victorian love sonnets, the Pre-Raphaelite poems, and (in the case of the Italian influence) the sonnet form,[3] but did not rival the Miltonic-Wordsworthian force. With this ruling force and its effect on the early Victorian sonnets this article deals.

The supremacy of the sonnets of Milton and Wordsworth was acknowledged on all sides. "We think Milton's the finest sonnets of the old days of poetry, and Wordsworth's of the present,"[4] said the *Gentleman's Magazine*, linking the two names in typical fashion. The same periodical held that "every Sonnet of Milton is written in letters of gold"; Rossetti, who wrote sonnets of a different type, said that Milton's "seem . . . to be every one of them of exceptional excellence";[5] and Dyce, a great Elizabethan editor and champion of Shakespeare's sonnets, found Milton's "in easy majesty and severe beauty, unequalled by any other compositions."[6] Evidence for Wordsworth's popularity is given by *Blackwood's*, the *Athenaeum*, and the anthologists Housman and Woodford;[7] and

[3] For the influence of Italian example on form see Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, New York, 1880, 3. 257 note, William Pulling, *Sonnets*, London, 1840, introduction, R. P. Graves, *The Life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton*, London and Dublin, 1882-89, 2. 554 (Hamilton gave up the concluding alexandrine on learning that it was not used in Italian sonnets), and cf. the unfavorable criticism of Milton and Wordsworth for their deviations from strict Italian structure (Hallam, *Literature of Europe* 3. 264, *Edinburgh Review* 60 (1835). 356-7, and *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 24 (1845). 571). The sonnets of Coventry Patmore and the Rossettis show approximation to Italian models. The legitimate rime scheme is favored throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. It should also be said that sentimental sonnets with hackneyed poetic diction and other characteristics of quatorzains written *ca.* 1800 appear as late as 1850. In the 1830's two well-known earlier sonneteers, Egerton Brydges and Bowles, were active, many eighteenth century sonnets were included in Dyce's *Specimens of English Sonnets*, London, 1833, and Wordsworth wrote Dyce, May 10, 1830, asking for more of these poems.

[4] *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 16 (1841). 510. Cf. the *Penny Cyclopaedia*, London, 1841, 22. 246, which takes the Miltonic-Wordsworthian sonnet, written about "grave, dignified, and contemplative subjects," as the typical English sonnet. The next quotation is from *Gentleman's Magazine* 103 pt. 2 (1833). 154. Cf. *Blackwood's*, 38 (1835). 243, and *Gentleman's Magazine* 103 pt. 1 (1833). 618-9.

[5] T. Hall Caine, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Boston, 1883, p. 237.

[6] A. Dyce, *Specimens of English Sonnets*, London, 1833, p. 215. Cf. Landor, who disliked English sonnets—except Milton's ("Southey and Landor," *Works*, London, 1876, 4. 511-12).

[7] In 1822 *Blackwood's* (12. 187) called Wordsworth's sonnets "infinitely superior to Milton's" and in 1835 (37. 720) found his latest sonnets "as clear, and bright,

evidence not only of the popularity but of the influence of both Milton and Wordsworth is furnished by periodicals. The *Gentleman's Magazine* considered Milton's sonnets "the great model and archetype of all that have been most eminent and successful in our language, in succeeding times," [8] and *Blackwood's* said of Wordsworth's "Many hundred excellent sonnets have been inspired by his." [9] The *Gentleman's Magazine* recommended Wordsworth's sonnets as "safe and elegant models for the imitation of younger poets." [10] Even sonnet critics felt the impact of the Miltonic-Wordsworthian model. Housman, in his remarks on sonnet structure, considered the *abba acca* octave "susceptible of very beautiful effect," [11] and ranked it above the, from the strict Italian point of view, more legitimate *abab abab* scheme; and he observed that "the frequent example of the best writers [particularly Milton] has sanctioned an exception" to the rules about stops, which may, consequently, fall within lines four or five, eight or nine, and eleven or twelve, as well as at the ends of four, eight, and eleven. The *Gentleman's Magazine* made an allowance like Housman's in permitting the sonnet to "run on without any decided pause or break through its structure, or . . . rest at the end of the eighth line." [12]

The subjects of sonnets influenced by Milton and Wordsworth are religious, descriptive, political, with a scattering of the personal address type. Religion and nature description

and strong, as the first." R. F. Housman printed twice as many of Wordsworth's sonnets as of his nearest rival in the *Collection of English Sonnets*, London, 1835, and A. M. Woodford, who stressed the Elizabethans, printed only three more sonnets by Shakespeare than by Wordsworth in his *Book of Sonnets*, London, 1841. The *Athenaeum*, August 27, 1842, p. 758, praised Wordsworth highly but objected to the content of his sonnets on capital punishment (see Wordsworth's letter to John Peace, February 23, 1842, for other opposition to this group). In 1838 appeared a collected edition of Wordsworth's sonnets (cf. the implied demand for such a collection in *Blackwood's* 41 (1837). 447), and in 1841, in the *Quarterly Review*, Sir Henry Taylor's fine essay "Wordsworth's Sonnets."

[8] *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 14 (1840). 624.

[9] *Blackwood's* 41 (1837). 447.

[10] *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 24 (1845). 571.

[11] Housman, *Collection of English Sonnets*, p. xx. The next quotation is from p. xvii. The *abba acca* octave of course occurs frequently in Wordsworth's sonnets.

[12] *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 4 (1835). 408. Cf. the same periodical's criticism of Moxon's sonnets, n. s. 5 (1836). 280-1, for "the pauses being too much at the end of the lines."

were the principal subjects for sonneteers from 1828 to 1850, and it may be recalled that they were also Wordsworth's chief subjects after 1812. The religious sonnet, particularly in the 1830's, shows so strong a Miltonic (as well as Wordsworthian) influence that we may start by linking it to that influence, follow those trails as long as they run together, then track each down separately to 1850 after they part.

The use of the sonnet for religious poetry had increased somewhat after 1812, but hardly enough to deprive Wordsworth of the title of pioneer in the field with his *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (1822).[13] These were temperate and uncontroversial—certainly more Wordsworthian than Miltonic. They achieved high repute, however, and familiarized readers with such an employment of the form. When the Oxford Movement came to stir interest in religious questions, clergymen and others could turn to a form not only admirably adapted to the dignified expression of opinion or to the composition of reflective verse, but one already used for these purposes by England's greatest living poet. Turn they did, and we get for the first time in the nineteenth century numerous books with such titles as *Sonnets*; *Meditative and Devotional* (1835), *Sonnets, Moral, Descriptive, and Elegiac* (*ca.* 1833), and *Sonnets, and Other Short Poems, Chiefly on Sacred Subjects* (*ca.* 1834).[14] *Lyra Apostolica* (1836), the well known collection of poetry published by the Oxford group, devoted thirty-four of its two hundred and forty-three pages to sonnets, a larger percentage of the total space than that given to the form in any other collection or periodical examined. Isaac Williams defended the use of the form for religious subjects:

> And if of English bards the chief and best,
> Shakespeare and Spenser, such their sonnets wove,
> On the loose intricacies of creature love . . .
> Then may I not unblamed, from thoughts that teem
> Mid flowers of Paradise, a nobler theme
> Construct in semblance of the honied calls?[15]

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[13] The *Monthly Review* 94 (1821). 213, notes the scarcity of religious sonnets, and I found less than a hundred, excluding Wordsworth's, before 1828. There were not many in the eighteenth century; see Havens, *Influence of Milton*, p. 520.

[14] With these classifications of subject matter should be compared the favorite Della Cruscan or sentimental classification, common at the beginning of the century: "amatory, descriptive, and elegiac."

[15] Issac Williams, *The Altar*, London, 1847, p. 108.

Most of the lesser writers participating in this movement did not attain a Miltonic note but among the more important poets Keble, Newman, and Alford did.

These three stand out the more clearly because their most Miltonic sonnets were written between 1828 and 1839, when writers were just turning to the religious type, and it had not been swamped, as later, by a flood of mediocre efforts. Keble and Newman, too, were leaders of the Oxford Movement, and the fact that they composed sonnets of the Miltonic type in the midst of their activity witnesses the validity of that type for expression in moments of crisis. Keble's are Miltonic in their deep feeling and high principle; their denunciatory quality recalls the Milton of "On the Late Massacre in Piemont," as an octave will show:

> Is there no sound about our Altars heard
> Of gliding forms that long have watched in vain
> For slumbering discipline to break her chain,
> And aim the bolt by Theodosius fear'd?
> "Let us depart;"—these English souls are sear'd,
> Who, for one grasp of perishable gold,
> Would brave the curse by holy men of old
> Laid on the robbers of the shrines they rear'd.[16]

They often run the octave into the sestet, and their distinguishing characteristic, "veracity" or sincerity, is Miltonic. Newman's resemble Milton's more in restraint and fidelity to the feeling inspiring them, as in the tercet from "Abraham":

> Amid the scoffings of the wealth-enslaved,
> A ready prey, as though in absent mood
> They calmly move, nor reck the unmanner'd mirth.[17]

All but one have legitimate structures, and all seventeen were written before 1839. Some of Alford's show Miltonic influence colored by Wordsworthian transmission, but others, such as the one beginning

> Jackson, than whom none better skilled to lead
> The willing spirit captive with sweet lays,

[16] John Keble, "Let Us Depart Hence," *Poems,* Oxford, London, 1869, p. 39 (cf. "Athanasian Creed" and "Burial Service"). The next quotation is from p. xvii (George Moberly's Preface to the *Poems*).

[17] J. H. Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions,* London, 1880, p. 97.

are direct echoes of Milton. One in which Miltonic influence seems transmitted by Wordsworth may be quoted because its sentiment is typical of that expressed in most of these Miltonic religious poems:

> Herbert and Crashaw, and that other name
> Now dear as those, of him beneath whose eye
> Arose " the second Temple's " honoured frame
> After a carnal dark captivity,—
> These are remembrances of promise high,
> That set our smouldering energies on flame
> To dare for our Mother, and if need to die,
> Sooner than blot her reverend cheek with shame.
> O England, England! there hath twined among
> The woof of all thy gloomiest destinies
> A golden thread: a sound of sweetest song
> Hath cheered thee under sad and threatening skies;
> But thou hast revelled in the calm too long—
> And waxest all unmindful where thy safety lies.[18]

This noble ideal of defense of the Church even inspired one or two minor writers to approach Milton's organ tone. Charles Townsend and, to a greater extent, Adelaide Proctor do this, Townsend in his " England! thy Church hath nurtured at her breast," and Adelaide Proctor in a sonnet beginning

> O Mighty Mother, harken! for thy foes
> Gather around thee, and exulting cry
> That thine old strength is gone and thou must die,
> Pointing with fierce rejoicing to thy woes.[19]

But this is rare; and in the sonnets of Alford and Keble written after 1839 the Miltonism is weaker. The first fervor of the religious movement was apparently most conducive to loftiness of tone, so that 1839 may be taken to mark the departure of the Miltonic influence from the religious sonnet. Looking more closely at the work of Keble and Alford, we can detect an influence nearly equal to Milton's from the start. Keble's fre-

[18] Henry Alford, " Written in an Interval of Melancholy Foreboding Respecting the Church," *Poetical Works*, Boston, 1853, p. 154. The lines quoted above are from " To William Jackson of Exeter," *ibid.*, p. 122. Probably Alford's classical studies reenforced his tendency to restraint, exemplified in his most famous sonnet, "Rise, said the Master, come unto the feast," and he has several fine sonnets on classical subjects, particularly " Before the day the gleaming dawn doth flee," and " Suggested by the Opening of the Oedipus Coloneus."

[19] Adelaide A. Proctor, *Complete Poetical Works*, New York, [1903], p. 340.

quent use of the *abba acca* octave, his later uncontroversial sonnets on church rites, and Alford's later sonnets descriptive of foreign places all point to Wordsworth, to whom Keble dedicated his *Praelectiones*, and whom Alford praised in a sonnet.[20]

Wordsworth's influence predominated in the 1830's in the religious sonnets of R. C. Trench, Sir Aubrey de Vere, Isaac Williams, among the major writers, and probably also in many of the sonnets of such lesser authors as T. Roscoe, Edward Irving (who was inspired while composing lectures on divinity to write sonnets), W. S. Roscoe, and H. H. Milman. Trench used most frequently the *abba acca* octave and praised Wordsworth in his well formed poems. Sir Aubrey de Vere, strongly influenced by Wordsworth in his other sonnets, probably derived the idea of his group "Sonnets Religious and Moral" from Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sketches*.[21] Isaac Williams' numerous 1828-39 groups may have been influenced from the same source, and such influence was suggested by the *Gentleman's Magazine* [22] for his most elaborate later cycle, *The Altar* (1847), which describes in two hundred and four sonnets the events from Gethsemane to the Ascension. The majority of his three hundred and seventy-four sonnets deal with strictly religious subjects, treating them in a quiet and reverent spirit. Two-thirds have legitimate schemes, and two-thirds omit the octave pause. "Origen" is typical of the best non-Miltonic religious sonnets:

> Into God's word, as in a palace fair,
> Thou leadest on and on, while still beyond
> Each chamber, touch'd by holy wisdom's wand,
> Another opes, more beautiful and rare;

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[20] The sonnet "Recollections of Wordsworth's 'Ruth'" (cf. "Rydal Mount"). Cf. the *Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 31 (1849). 508: "In Mr. Alford's verses we have too strong a recollection of Wordsworth." Alford's frequent use of the concluding alexandrine may have been derived from Wordsworth, certainly not from Milton. Keble, making an address at Oxford on the occasion of the granting of an honorary degree to the Lake Poet in 1839, placed emphasis on Wordsworth as a religious poet (see J. T. Coleridge, *Memoir of Keble*, London, 1869, pp. 248-9).

[21] See *Dublin University Magazine* 21 (1843). 198. Cf. the titles of Sir Aubrey's religious sonnets—such as "The Primeval Church," "The Elder Ministry," "The Decline and Restoration of the Church," "The Later Ministry"—with those of Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sketches*.

[22] *Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 31 (1849). 387. The 1828-39 groups are "The Golden Valley," "The Country Pastor," and "The Cloisters."

And thou in each art kneeling down in prayer,
From link to link of that mysterious bond
Seeking for Christ; but oh, I fear thy fond
And beautiful torch, that with so bright a glare
Lighteth up all things, lest the heaven-lit brand
Of thy serene Philosophy divine
Should take the colourings of earthly thought,
And I, by their sweet images o'er-wrought,
Led by weak Fancy should let go Truth's hand
And miss the way into the inner shrine.[23]

Hartley Coleridge's poems on Scriptural subjects, written for the most part in the 1830's, also recall Wordsworth. Only Mrs. Hemans' colorful, pictorial group, "Female Characters of Scripture," seems particularly un-Wordsworthian.[24]

After 1839 the religious sonnet displaced the descriptive as the most popular type. Perhaps the example of the *Lyra Apostolica* bore fruit, or perhaps the volumes, all containing many sonnets, published by Alford, Williams, and Trench encouraged imitation. Even in the 1830's M. F. Tupper, the success of whose *Proverbial Philosophy* should indicate the author's ability to diagnose the popular taste, had included a large number of Scriptural poems in his "Modern Pyramid of Sonnets, to . . . the Great and Good." In the 1840-50 decade came numbers of such books as Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, H. D. Ryder's *Angelicon: a Gallery of Sonnets, on the Divine Attributes, Thirty-six Nonconformist Sonnets* by "A Young Englander," and (both containing sonnets) N. Clarke's *Poems Relating to the Present State and Prospects of the Church* and the anonymous *Hebrew Harpist.* Woodford included a section "Sacred and Ecclesiastical" in his 1841 sonnet anthology,[25] and the *Edinburgh Review* praised James

[23] *Lyra Apostolica,* London, 1872, p. 120.

[24] The religious subject matter predominates in her work of the 1830's, although not in her earlier sonnets, and she has another religious group, "Sonnets, Devotional and Memorial." Her structure is not so firm as that of Trench or Williams (cf. Housman, *Collection of English Sonnets,* p. 336: "Mrs. Hemans' genius was better adapted to the unrestricted ode than to the compact and fastidious Sonnet").

[25] There are forty-eight sonnets in this section, eighteen by Wordsworth. Among the other writers represented are Mrs. Hemans and (called anonymous) the *Lyra Apostolica* poets, Keble, Williams, and Newman. Since these three are almost the only outstanding Victorian sonneteers Woodford includes in his book (H. Coleridge, R. C. Trench, Tennyson-Turner, and Sir Aubrey de Vere are all missing), it seems possible that the *Lyra Apostolica* did, as suggested, influence people interested in the sonnet.

Glassford's 1846 edition of *Lyrical Compositions Selected from the Italian Poets* because " very many of the pieces he gave, and especially of the sonnets, are strictly religious poems." [26] As the Nonconformist volume shows, the form was not monopolized by the Church of England. On the whole the religious sonnet suffered some loss in quality from its increased popularity, and an example from a lesser writer, I. C. Wright, may be quoted to typify the uninspired treatment more common after 1839:

> Dark was the day, and darker still the deed,
> When humbly bowing down to earth His head,
> Beneath the cross the Blessed One was led,
> A spotless Lamb for guilty man to bleed.
> All nature mourned—the graves gave up their dead,
> And Earth, ashamed at such impiety,
> A veil of deepest shade around her spread.
> Surpassing Love—that God Himself should buy
> Pardon for man, (by such humility
> Paying the debt proud man could never pay),
> And by such perfect sacrifice defy
> The threats of Satan, and find out a way
> To rescue all from Death's envenomed sting
> Who own Him for their Saviour, and their King.[27]

In this 1840-50 decade the religious sonnet, having lost in Miltonic character as well as quality, is left completely to the Wordsworthian influence. The minor writers are probably influenced mainly by the Lake Poet, to whom Clarke addressed a sonnet, and whose *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, according to the *Athenaeum*,[28] inspired the *Thirty-six Nonconformist Sonnets*; and among more important figures Faber, the younger Aubrey de Vere, and perhaps Hawker, as well as those who began in the 1830's and continue, show his influence. Both Hawker and Faber are unusual in following irregular rime schemes, but Hawker's " The Vine," beginning

> Hearken! there is in old Morwenna's shrine,
> (A lonely sanctuary of the Saxon days,
> Rear'd by the Severn sea for prayer and praise,)
> Amid the carved work of the roof, a vine,[29]

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[26] *Edinburgh Review* 84 (1846). 112. The *Edinburgh* is glad to see the religious favored at the expense of the amatory subject matter, particularly in the sonnet.

[27] I. C. Wright, " The Crucifixion," *Poems*, Nottingham, 1873, p. 25.

[28] *Athenaeum*, April 11, 1846, p. 372.

[29] R. S. Hawker, *Poetical Works*, ed. Alfred Wallis, London and New York, 1899, p. 53. Wordsworth's influence on Faber is discussed below.

may be mentioned as typically Wordsworthian. The younger de Vere, who wrote over fifty " theosophical sonnets, in which certain dreams and dogmas of the author are propounded in the severe logic of Wordsworthian verse," [30] resembles his master in structure as well as religious subject matter. His poems are nearly all legitimate, one-fourth of them omit the octave pause, the concluding alexandrine appears frequently, and the two sestet schemes most used, *cdcdee* and *cddcee*, were favorites of Wordsworth's. A quatrain will illustrate his level Wordsworthian style:

> High Truths profanely gazed at, unadored,
> Will be abused at first, at last abhorred;
> And many a learned, many a lofty brow
> Hath rested, pillowed on a humbler vow
> Than keen logicians notice or record.[31]

The best Miltonic specimens of the 1830's have already been examined in connection with the religious sonnet. Other examples of that time are Tennyson's " Alexander," " Buonaparte," and " Poland," H. F. Cary's " Durham, there are who blame thy hardihood," a few of Charles Wyatt's,[32] particularly " Poland! the voice that on the banks of Seine," and perhaps J. H. Merivale's four political sonnets of 1834-35. These are all more occasional than the Miltonic religious sonnets, the Oxford writers having more of a dominant theme. Cary's is typical:

> Durham, there are who blame thy hardihood
> Unfolding past misgovernment to view,
> Branding thy rabid foe with stigma due
> To treacherous wiles, and shaming the false blood
> Of friends, that weakly his blind fang withstood.
> Not so thy Country. Thee she bids pursue
> Thy homeward way in peace; of courtly crew

[30] *Dublin University Magazine* 21 (1843). 200. Professor Saintsbury calls de Vere " chief of all Wordsworthians pure and simple " (" Lesser Poets of the Middle and Later Nineteenth Century, " *CHEL* 13. 188).

[31] Aubrey de Vere, " Evidences of Religion 2," *The Waldenses,* Oxford, 1842, p. 251. Figures on structure given above are based on all of de Vere's 324 sonnets. After 1850 he wrote a number of political, but not Miltonic, sonnets about the plight of Ireland, and fairly many on medieval subjects. Of his other sonnets before 1850 those on classical subjects should be mentioned, particularly for the sympathy with the terror-inspiring qualities of Greek tragedy shown in several.

[32] Praised by the *Gentleman's Magazine* n. s. 8 (1837), 390, for their " pure and masculine style."

Careless alike, and faction's aspic brood.
Come then; and thy proud course in triumph keep
Through angry billows trembling as they roar:
Freedom's pure gales, that from Colombia sweep,
With kindred breath shall urge thy hastening prore,
A queenly planet smile upon the deep,
And Britain's Pharos light thee to the shore.[33]

Inasmuch as Cary had composed sentimental sonnets in the eighteenth century, had since translated many French and Italian examples, and written, in 1816, an original sonnet recalling Gray and the Italians, his composing a sonnet of this type shows how orthodox it was to use the Miltonic model for political subjects, particularly foreign affairs. Writers not especially Miltonic in temperament, such as Disraeli and D. G. Rossetti, turned to it later.[34] Rossetti's refer to the European situation of 1848, and it is interesting that that crisis, although it inspired three sonnets by Arnold and a fine one by William Michael Rossetti, "Democracy Downtrodden," did not bring forth so many good Miltonic sonnets as the Oxford Movement. William Michael Rossetti's *Democratic Sonnets* (1907), written between 1841 and 1881, fall below the work of such a writer as Newman,[35] and Ebeneezer Elliott's "The Year of Seeds," a cycle of revolutionary sonnets, owes nothing to Milton.[36] On the whole, the Miltonic political sonnet does not

[33] *Examiner,* November 25, 1838, quoted in R. W. King, *The Translator of Dante,* London, 1925, p. 277. The sonnet refers to Lord Durham's report of conditions in Canada after the 1837 revolt. The 1816 sonnet mentioned below is Cary's "Sonnet on the Death of His Daughter."

[34] Cf. Rossetti's "On the Refusal of Aid Between Nations" and "At the Sunrise," Disraeli's "Wellington." Arnold's three sonnets on the 1848 situation, mentioned below, are "To a Republican Friend, 1848" (two sonnets) and "To the Hungarian Nation."

[35] Cf. the following lines from W. M. Rossetti's "Emile Ollivier 1869-74," *Democratic Sonnets,* London, 1907, 1. xxxi:

Light-hearted Ollivier, the spectacled owl
Spectacular. He plays at liberty
Of thought and speech and constitution, he
Who hears, not distant, Insurrection howl.

Most of these sonnets deal with foreign affairs, over half of them omit the octave pause, and nearly all are legitimate. It is characteristic that William Michael, more of a typical Englishman than his brother, should adopt the Miltonic structure and subject matter; Dante is Italian in writing of love, subtler handling of the form, more frequent observation of pauses.

[36] Elliott's experimental rime schemes are influenced by Spenser; see Ebeneezer

show any development in the 1828-50 period, although written somewhat more frequently then than earlier. It remained distinctly an occasional type; writers were probably wise in recognizing it as such and not attempting to compose cycles in imitation of Wordsworth's Liberty group. That its prestige was of the highest is shown by the appearance of William Michael Rossetti's "Democracy Downtrodden" among the Pre-Raphaelite poems of the *Germ*.

The Miltonic sonnet of personal address, a favorite type in the eighteenth century but one that had declined after 1800, did not regain its earlier popularity. Ebeneezer Elliott, in his "Rhymed Rambles," C. L. Smith, and an anonymous author of *Poems* (1850), used frequently the initial vocative, while almost any writer influenced by Wordsworth or the eighteenth century was likely to compose one or two examples of this type. But less than one-twelfth of five thousand sonnets examined for 1828-50 were of personal address, and many of those were not Miltonic. Thus E. Kenealy's lack the Miltonic vigor. Forster's to Dickens begins

> GENIUS AND ITS REWARDS ARE BRIEFLY TOLD:
> A LIBERAL NATURE AND A NIGGARD DOOM.[37]

Not one of T. N. Talfourd's seven examples of the type begins with a vocative, yet all are dignified and gracious—sonnets that would inevitably have been Miltonic if written in the eighteenth century. That "To Charles Dickens, on His 'Oliver Twist'" is typical of many of the better sonnets of personal address composed from 1828-50:

> Not only with the author's happiest praise
> Thy work should be rewarded; 'tis akin
> To Deeds of men, who, scorning ease to win
> A blessing for the wretched, pierce the maze
> Which heedless ages spread around the ways
> Where fruitful Sorrow tracks its parent Sin;
> Content to listen to the wildest din

Elliott, *Poetical Works*, ed. Edwin Elliott, London, 1876, 2.226 (cf. 303). Among other poems of this Miltonic political type, a few in Lord Hanmer's *Sonnets* (1840) are good, particularly "America." The Duke of Rutland wrote sonnets on foreign affairs that owe nothing to Milton.

[37] John Forster, *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, London, 1854, 1. 5. Talfourd's sonnet quoted below is from T. N. Talfourd, *Dramatic Works*, London, 1852, p. 342.

Of passion, and on dismal shapes to gaze,
So they may earn the power which intercedes
With the bright world and melts it; for within
Wan childhood's squalid haunts, where basest needs
Make tyranny more bitter, at thy call,
An angel face with patient sweetness pleads
For infant suffering to the heart of all.

Talfourd is a fair example because from his praise of Wordsworth, use of the legitimate scheme in half of his sonnets, and usual omission of the octave pause, one might expect him to be influenced by Wordsworth toward the Miltonic type.[38] Of course, the sonnet of personal address cannot be separated too sharply from the political type, and there the vocative often breaks forth with all its old vigor, as in the example by Cary quoted above. Probably the vocative, and indeed the Miltonic influence as a whole, persisted more strongly in the political type because abruptness, force, and directness are more suitable to it; in a friendly address such qualities may seem idiosyncratic.

It may appear, from what has been said thus far about the slackening of Miltonic influence on the religious sonnet around 1839, the occasional and scattered character of the Miltonic political sonnets, and the comparative dearth of Miltonic sonnets of personal address, that the Puritan's influence was not after all so great. But this is not so. Compared to what it had been from 1800-28 it was enormous, for perhaps the majority of Wordsworthians—whose number was almost legion—were also to some degree Miltonists. With R. C. Trench, they considered Milton's sonnets "the noblest in the English language"; [39] with Sir Aubrey de Vere they held often a Miltonic conception of the form, valuing it "the more because its austere brevity, its severity, and its majestic completeness fit it especially for the loftier themes of song." [40] They aimed at a

[38] For Talfourd's praise of Wordsworth see his sonnet "On the Reception of the Poet Wordsworth at Oxford (1839)." It should be remembered, however, that Wordsworth has the initial vocative in less than a third of his personal address sonnets after 1812, but employed it in over half of those written before 1812.

[39] R. C. Trench, "The History of the English Sonnet," *The Afternoon Lectures on Literature and Art*, 4th. ser., London and Dublin, 1867, p. 149. Cf. the admiration of Ellison ("ablest . . . of Wordsworth's disciples," according to D. M. Main, *A Treasury of English Sonnets*, New York, 1881, p. 413) for Milton, expressed in three sonnets, all called "Milton."

[40] Memoir by the younger Aubrey de Vere, in Sir Aubrey de Vere's *Sonnets*,

Miltonic ideal, and if usually they failed to attain it, sometimes they succeeded. John Moultrie's "To the Rev. Dr. Arnold," for example, shows this:

> Sound teachers are there of religion pure
> And unimpeach'd morality; grave men,
> Who wield a cautious and deliberate pen,
> And preach and publish doctrine safe and sure;
> And many such, I ween, can ill endure
> The eagle glance of thy far-piercing ken,
> But almost deem thee from some Stygian den
> Of monstrous error sprung, obscene, obscure.
> Well! they may rail till they have rail'd their fill;
> Only let me, by such sweet poison fed,
> Drink from thy clear and ever flowing rill
> Refreshment and support for heart and head;
> Oft disagreeing, but extracting still
> More food from stones of thine, than such men's bread.[41]

This strong Miltonism did not fall off toward the end of the half-century; just before 1850 come the first of twenty-eight of the most Miltonic poems since Wordsworth's Liberty series.

Matthew Arnold's sonnets in their subjects, chiefly religion or philosophy of life and personal address, and in their structure, for the most part legitimate, resemble the Miltonic group we have been examining. They may also be linked to that group by their occasional display of Wordsworthian influence, in *abba acca* octaves and in such lines as "Children (as such forgive them) have I known," and

> The seeds of godlike power are in us still;
> Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes, if we will!
> Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery? [42]

Further, the first sonnet that Arnold wrote, "To the Hungarian Nation," was a typical Miltonic one dealing with foreign affairs.

London, 1875, p. xiii. Professor Havens, *Influence of Milton*, p. 542, points out the Miltonic nature of Sir Aubrey's conception. Cf. the similarly Miltonic conception held by the younger Aubrey de Vere, Memoir, p. xiii: "A true sonnet is characterized by greatness, not prettiness; . . . it is in substance solidly simple."

[41] John Moultrie, *Poems*, London, 1837, p. 50.

[42] Matthew Arnold, "Written in Emerson's Essays," *Poetical Works*, London, 1890, p. 3. The single line is from "Religious Isolation," *ibid.*, p. 8. In structure, Arnold did not omit the octave pause so frequently as Milton, but agreed with Milton rather than the Victorian Miltonists in not using the concluding alexandrine. His sonnets of personal address are more reflective, less complimentary or invitational than Milton's, but he resembles Milton in not writing any descriptive sonnets.

But Arnold's kinship with Milton lies even more in a similarity of temperament than in likeness of subject matter and form. Both men were classical, resolute, scholarly; and these attributes were reflected in the sonnets of each—classically exemplified in Arnold's "To a Friend."[43]

Arnold brings the Miltonic influence up to 1850, and in considering the course of the religious sonnet from 1828-50 we have already seen something of Wordsworth's influence. We have left the task of tracing it in a field to which Milton did not contribute—that of the descriptive sonnet.

The 1828-50 descriptive sonnet differs from the religious type in that it was not a comparatively new development. It carried on the exact observation and sobriety that Wordsworth had introduced earlier, showing no changes except in the amount of Wordsworthian influence it evidenced—that is, more in the 1830's, less later. Indeed, there are not many descriptive sonnets written by the early Victorians that appear of a distinctly un-Wordsworthian type;[44] and from the number of descriptive and didactic sonnets composed one wonders whether these Victorians did not agree to Wordsworth's classification of the form itself as a didactic-descriptive genre.[45] The *Athenaeum*, in 1836, spoke of the "gentle, unobtrusive sonnet" as

[43] Arthur Hugh Clough's sonnets, a few of which were written before 1850, resemble Arnold's in their seriousness and their religious or philosophical subjects (cf. the groups "Seven Sonnets on the Thought of Death" and "Blank Misgivings of a Creature moving about in Worlds not realised"). In spite of the legitimate schemes of half of them and their frequent omission of the octave pause, they are not Miltonic; lines such as

> If it is thou whose casual hand withdraws
> What it at first as casually did make,
> Say what amount of ages it will take
> With tardy rare concurrences of laws,
> And subtle multiplicities of cause,
> The thing they once had made us to remake

suggest Donne (Arthur Hugh Clough, "Seven Sonnets on the Thought of Death," *Poems*, London, 1913, p. 321).

[44] Those of George Murray, Ruskin, Dugald Moore, David Mallock, R. F. Housman, do not appear Wordsworthian, many having a more romantic and glowing color than the Lake Poet used.

[45] Wordsworth, "Preface to the Edition of 1815," *Prose Works*, ed. Knight, 2. 205. The sonnet is classed under the idyllium, a type "descriptive chiefly either of the processes and appearances of external nature . . . or of characters, manners, and sentiments . . . or of these in conjunction with the appearances of Nature."

a form of composition well suited for pure thoughts and delicate fancies; but too calm, too restrained in its structure and progress, to afford a possible vehicle for the bursts, starts, throes, and outpourings of magnificent madness, which was characteristic of the last reigning school.[46]

and the anthologist Housman, from his opposition to the narrative sequence and to the love sonnet, appears to have held an idyllic conception of the form;[47] while Robert Snow, in 1843, said in the Lake Poet's own words, "The Sonnet properly belongs to Idyllic poetry."[48] One new development there is, however, and that is the appearance of numerous tour sequences and sonnets descriptive of foreign places. There had been few books earlier with such titles as *Sonnets, Written Chiefly During a Tour Through Holland, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and Hungary* (1839), and *The Shadow of the Pyramid* (*ca.* 1847), the latter "a collection of Sonnets written . . . during a recent visit to Egypt."[49] Now such books appeared, and, in greater numbers, travel groups and sequences within books, like John Bowring's "Sonnets Written During a Late Tour in Italy," Sir Aubrey de Vere's "Atlantic Coast Scenery,"[50] Catherine Godwin's "Four Sonnets written during a Summer Tour on the Continent," and Francis Skurray's "Descriptive of Alpine Scenery," "Descriptive of the Apennines," and "Descriptive of the Pyrenees."[51] Among authors of detached sonnets on foreign places, Charles Wyatt, W. S. Rose, Charles Strong, and Lord Houghton might be mentioned.[52] Although not all of these writers were influenced by Wordsworth—Skurray, for example, should be treated in connection with the eighteenth century type—it is difficult to

[46] *Athenaeum,* January 30, 1836, p. 88.

[47] Housman, *Collection of English Sonnets,* pp. vi-vii.

[48] Robert Snow, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects,* London, 1843, p. xvii. Since Snow acknowledges indebtedness to Wordsworth's Preface of 1815, he must mean by 'idyllic' what Wordsworth defined the type as there (cf. note 45 above).

[49] *Athenaeum,* April 8, 1848, p. 364.

[50] "The records, probably, of a very recent tour," according to the *Dublin University Magazine* 21 (1843). 199.

[51] Skurray's are unusual in being the records of an imaginary tour. See his *Shepherd's Calendar,* London, 1832, pp. vii-viii.

[52] Excepting Sir Aubrey de Vere, Houghton is the best of the sonneteers named in this paragraph. His work resembles Wordsworth's in didacticism and legitimate structure, and he was classed with the "school of Wordsworth" in the sonnet by the *Dublin Review* n. s., 28 (1877). 147. Cf. his praise of Wordsworth in the sonnet "To a Certain Poet."

believe that the notion of composing tour cycles, if not that of writing on foreign places, did not come ultimately from his example.[53] The majority do show his influence. Wyatt notes a borrowing from Wordsworth in one of his sonnets, echoes him again in such a line as "There are, whose earth-bound spirits never stray," and addresses one of his examples to a lady "With a Volume of Wordsworth's Sonnets."[54] Bowring and Lady Wortley observed the legitimate structure and frequently omitted the octave pause. Catherine Godwin used the *abba acca* octave in two of her sonnets, and admired Wordsworth, who praised her poetry.[55] It is clear also that the cycles had a looseness comparable to Wordsworth's. Ferguson was criticized for the lack of connection between his poems in *The Shadow of the Pyramid,*[56] and Lady Wortley's method of composition did not make for continuity.[57] One of Catherine Godwin's sonnets may serve as an example for the writers named here and for the tour type:

[53] Three of Wordsworth's large tour sequences, *Yarrow Revisited,* "Poems Composed or Suggested During a Tour, in the Summer of 1833," and "Memorials of a Tour in Italy," fall in the 1828-50 period. There may also have been some influence from Bowles, author of tour sonnets in the previous century; the influence second to that of Wordsworth on the writers named here was that of the eighteenth century (Lady Wortley's remarks, quoted below in note 57, recall Bowles, for example). If Wordsworth's example was the main factor in the travel sequence, as it was certainly in the religious sequence, Wordsworth may be credited with inspiring a revival of the sonnet sequence or at least loose sonnet group; for there were few groups before 1828, while nearly all the groups from 1828-50 are either descriptive or religious.

[54] See Charles P. Wyatt, *Poems, Original and Translated,* London, 1837, pp. 204, 14, 13.

[55] See Catherine Grace Garnett Godwin, *Poetical Works,* ed. A. Cleveland Wigan, London, 1854, pp. v-vi. Cf. the titles of her sonnets, "Composed in a Dell of the Black Forest," "The Ruins of Heidelberg Castle," "To the Rhine at Cologne," and "On Seeing for the First Time a Distant Range of Higher Alps," with those of Wordsworth's travel sonnets. "On Seeing for the First Time a Distant Range of Higher Alps," *ibid.,* p. 473, is quoted below.

[56] *Dublin University Magazine* 30 (1847). 575.

[57] "During this equestrian journey, as well as the rest of my tour, I could not resist, whenever I had any opportunity, putting pen (or rather *pencil*) to paper, and indulging in rhymed lucubrations, concerning the spots I had just seen—the feelings they aroused, &c. &c. Whatever the little pieces, collected in this volume, may lack, at least they were born of the impulse and impression of the moment,—were genuine, and from the heart." Lady E. Stuart Wortley, *Sonnets, Written Chiefly During a Tour Through Holland, Germany, Italy, Turkey, and Hungary,* London, 1839, pp. 14-15.

Can this be real? Those celestial heights
Piled far above the highest range of clouds,
Which but aspire to wrap their vapoury shrouds
Midway around them in their loftiest flights;
Can they, the idols, be enshrined with rites
Of my Soul's worship? Rather might I deem
The whole a fleeting though a glorious dream:
So vision-like, bathed in eve's golden lights,
Along the horizon lies yon populous host
Of Alpine Summits. Man with man may vie,
Building up palaces, where Sovereign power,
Rules subject nations through life's feverish hour:
But those fair domes, above all mortal boast,
Have virgin thrones Angels might occupy.

Turning to the more important writers of the descriptive sonnet—of authors named thus far only Sir Aubrey de Vere deserves this title—we find such poets as Sir Aubrey de Vere, Hartley Coleridge, Tennyson Turner, Henry Ellison, Richard Howitt, Thomas Burbidge, and Frederick Faber influenced by Wordsworth. The Lake Poet, who approved of work that approached his own type of accomplishment, considered the sonnets of his friend Sir Aubrey de Vere "the best of modern times," [58] and Wordsworthian reminiscences appear all through them. Not only does descriptive verse like

Broad, but not deep, along his rock-chafed bed,
In many a sparkling eddy winds the flood,
Clasp by a margin of green underwood,

to which about a third of the one hundred and forty-nine sonnets are devoted, recall Wordsworth, but "Intimations of Past Existence" repeats the thought of Wordsworth's famous "Ode," and "The Ways of the World" seems modelled on "The world is too much with us." The legitimate structure of the sonnets, the run-on octaves and rimed couplet endings of nearly half of them, and the many concluding alexandrines also point to Wordsworth.[59] Richard Howitt, who prefaced his sec-

[58] Aubrey de Vere, *Recollections of Wordsworth,* in Wordsworth, *Prose Works,* ed. Grosart, London, 1876, 3. 492.

[59] The lines quoted are from Sir Aubrey de Vere's "Castleconnel," *A Song of Faith Devout Exercises and Sonnets,* London, 1842, p. 190. Sir Aubrey de Vere dedicated this book, which contains nearly all of his sonnets, to Wordsworth and prefaced it with Sonnet 14 of Wordsworth's "Sonnets Upon the Punishment of Death," a suitable but not obvious choice, and one which perhaps none but an admirer of Wordsworth would have made because of the hostile reception of that

tion of sonnets in *Antediluvian Sketches* (1830) with lines one to eleven of the Lake Poet's "Nuns fret not," favored the Shakespearean form, but his sonnets on violets, the evening, children, and the influence of nature upon the imagination approach familiar Wordsworthian themes. Faber had "not only as good an eye for Nature as I have, but even a better one,"[60] said Wordsworth, and his more than one hundred sonnets, of which nature is the chief subject, contain perhaps the best description of all referred to here. The following is typically Wordsworthian:

> It was the earliest evening of the spring:
> The hills with vernal green were gently flushed,
> And every sound about the place was hushed,
> Except the blue lake softly murmuring.
> The glow of sunset came there, dusk and rosy;
> I met a little child in Rydal vale,
> With a huge bunch of daffodils, a posy
> Large as the child herself, who was but frail,
> And hot with climbing; and in all the rills
> With both hands clasped, she dipped her daffodils;
> And ever as she walked she loved to wipe
> Her face with those wet flowers, and it did please
> Her simple heart to hear the thrushes pipe,
> And she would look for them among the trees.

Titles such as "The Brathay Kingfisher," "On the Heights Near Devoke Water," and "Admiration of Nature" sound Wordsworthian, and "To a Bookish Friend" repeats the thought of "The Tables Turned."[61] Burbidge used frequently the *abba acca* octave, addressed three sonnets to Wordsworth, and echoed the Lake Poet's teaching in such lines as

cycle. The Wordsworthian influence upon Sir Aubrey de Vere's "Sonnets Religious and Moral" was mentioned above, and a larger group, "On the Lord's Prayer," was probably influenced from the same source.

[60] Aubrey de Vere, *Recollections of Wordsworth*, in Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, ed. Grosart, 3. 488. The sonnet quoted below is Frederick Faber's "Rydal Vale, 1," *Poems*, London, 1857, p. 332.

[61] Faber's dislike for the fad of nature (see his sonnets "Admiration of Nature" and "Scenery Hunting") suggests that his appreciation of nature was comparable to Wordsworth's in sincerity. He is like Wordsworth in his frequent omission of the octave pause, but unlike him in using irregular rime schemes. It is curious that Main, *Treasury of Engish Sonnets*, p. 442, reprints without comment the remark of the *Dublin Review* n. s. 27 (1877). 158, that Faber's sonnets are "almost all regular in form."

wherefore have men,
The wisest, grudged not an unthrifty leaning
For hours against a tree in some still glen,
Or by the marge of brook or ocean; gleaning
From all the wondrous things discovered then,
A rule for thoughts unjust or overweening,[62]

to which might be compared Ellison's verses about "The deep Morality, the Wisdom clear" displayed by nature's works. Called by Main "the ablest and sweetest-voiced of Wordsworth's disciples,"[63] Ellison resembles the Lake Poet in his legitimate structure, usual omission of the regular pauses, and occasionel employment of the *abba acca* octave, as well as in the sentiment of his few descriptive sonnets.

This is probably enough to show Wordsworth' predominant influence on the descriptive sonnet, even excluding the tour development; Hartley Coleridge and Tennyson Turner bear witness also to a Wordsworthian reign over the form generally during the 1830's, since they are usually considered the best sonneteers of that time. Hall Caine points out an un-Wordsworthian side in Hartley: "What strikes us . . . as the truly individual side of Hartley Coleridge's genius is the profound yet simple pathos, the soft and touching, indeed all but indescribable suggestion of baffled purposes, of hopes half realised, of loves slipping away";[64] but Hartley resembles the Lake Poet in his careful observation of even the humblest aspects of nature, typified by such lines as

Though Night and Winter are two gloomy things,
Yet Night has stars, and Winter has the moss,
And the wee pearly goblets that emboss
The lumbering wall on which the redbreast sings,[65]

[62] Thomas Burbidge, "Occasional Sonnets. 16," *Poems, Longer and Shorter,* London, 1838, p. 206.

[63] D. M. Main, *Treasury of English Sonnets,* New York, 1881, p. 413. Ellison's verses quoted are from his sonnet "Nature," in *Madmoments,* London, 1839, 1. 42. Cf. "The Dayseye," in which Main, p. 414, detects a Wordsworthian echo. Most of the two hundred and seventy-eight sonnets I examined, however, were didactic. "Pleasure," "Wisdom," "Freedom," "The Painter," "The Pen" are some typical titles. Ellison's poems range from about twelve to sixteen lines in length, none are called sonnets, and nearly all begin with an Italian octave. He frequently ends lines on lightly stressed words.

[64] T. Hall Caine, *Sonnets of Three Centuries,* London, 1882, p. 307. Cf. the sonnet "Long time a child, and still a child, when years."

[65] Hartley Coleridge, "Written in a Period of Great Monetary Distress," *Poems,* ed. Derwent Coleridge, London, 1851, 2. 74.

and in his use of run-on and *abba acca* octaves in half of his sonnets. Three of his sonnets are addressed to Wordsworth, who praised those in Hartley Coleridge's 1833 volume.[66] Tennyson Turner's classical, polished style recalls Wordsworth's—he was not, like Hartley Coleridge, averse to revision—and, amid much sentimental prettiness, he sometimes attains a Wordsworthian insight in his sonnets. This S. T. Coleridge may have had in mind when he connected them with the sonnets of Wordsworth and Southey;[67] it may be exemplified by the following octave:

> 'Tis good our earliest sympathies to trace!
> And I would muse upon a little thing;
> What brought the blush into that infant's face
> When first confronted with the rueful king?
> He boldly came—what made his courage less?
> A signal for the heart to beat less free
> Are all imperial presences, and he
> Was awed by Death's consummate kingliness.

The descriptive predominates in Turner's work before 1850, although he has no groups comparable to Hartley Coleridge's "Sonnets Suggested by the Seasons" or "Sonnets and Other Poems on Birds, Insects, and Flowers." Both writers held modest conceptions of the form, reminding us of the *Athenaeum's* reference to the "gentle, unobtrusive sonnet." Turner's was apparently based on Wordsworth's phrase, "the sonnet's hum-

[66] Wordsworth to Dyce, December 4, 1833. Wordsworth's is usually recognized as the predominating influence in Hartley Coleridge's sonnets; cf. Derwent Coleridge in his edition of the *Poems* 1. clxxv-clxxvi, and Housman, *Collection of English Sonnets*, p. 341. Hartley Coleridge's resemblance to Wordsworth in his group of religious sonnets was noted above. His run-on octaves are curious in that they usually have the stop in the middle of the ninth line—that is, in these octaves the writer observes a rather regular irregularity.

[67] "This (and indeed a large proportion of these sonnets) stands between Wordsworth's and Southey's, and partakes of the excellencies of both." Coleridge's marginal note in his copy of Turner's *Sonnets* (1830), as reprinted in Tennyson Turner's *Collected Sonnets*, London, 1880, p. 46. Cf. Coleridge's mention of Turner's "highly classical and polished diction," *ibid.*, p. 54. The octave quoted below is from "On Seeing a Child Blush on Her First View of a Corpse," *ibid.*, p. 61. After 1830 Turner wrote no more sonnets until beyond the middle of the century, when, stirred by the controversy over Biblical criticism, he overcame his fears about the lack of originality of his sonnets and produced additional volumes of them in 1864, 1868, 1873. The later examples resemble the early ones except for the dogmatic attacks upon Biblical critics. Turner is not like Wordsworth in structure, except in fairly frequent omission of the octave pause; he favors irregular schemes.

ble plot of ground," which he adopted as the motto for his earliest volume. He called the form "the least of rhythmic things"[68] and in prefatory sonnets to his 1864 and 1868 volumes confessed how far beyond his powers was the greater ode. Hartley Coleridge made the following comparison: "Miniature occupies about the same station in art that sonnet obtains in poetry—exquisite finish, softness, and brilliance, are essential to both, and perhaps portability is the best property of either."[69]

Strangely enough, the descriptive sonnet proved weakest of the links in the Miltonic-Wordsworthian chain. Of the fewer descriptive poems written in the 1840's a number show Pre-Raphaelite influence.[70] The political sonnet remained, as we have seen, almost exclusively Miltonic, and the religious type went, broadly, from Miltonic to Wordsworthian. There is no sharp decline in the proportion of sonnets showing Miltonic-Wordsworthian influence in the 1840's, although there is a falling off. In the year 1850 this influence was still predominant over all others, and as late as 1876, when Rossetti's work had achieved considerable fame, an article in the *Dublin Review* containing an extensive discussion of the nineteenth century sonnet paid most attention to the writers we have been con-

[68] Tennyson Turner, "The Eagle and the Sonnet," *Collected Sonnets*, p. 309.

[69] Hartley Coleridge, *Essays and Marginalia*, London, 1851, 1. 234-5. On the fitness of the sonnet form to Hartley's character see Walter Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, London, 1879, 1. 63-5. The form did not curb his spontaneity of composition. "His sonnets were all written instantaneously, and never, to my knowledge, occupied more than ten minutes; when he once challenged me to a match, and exceeded that time, he tore up the paper," wrote Thomas Blackburne (Blackburne to Derwent Coleridge, October 29, 1850, quoted in H. Coleridge, *Poems* 1. cxliv). Earl L. Griggs, in *Hartley Coleridge*, London, 1929, p. 184, attributes Hartley Coleridge's lack of compactness and strength to this spontaneity; yet it may also be in part the cause of qualities for which Samuel Waddington calls him "after Shakespeare our sweetest English sonneteer." (*The Poets and Poetry of the Century*, ed. A. H. Miles, London, 1892-97, 3. 136).

[70] Cf. especially the numerous sonnets published in periodicals by Calder Campbell, in the 1840's, and the descriptive sonnets in the *Germ* (1850). The new Pre-Raphaelite qualities of brilliance and vivid detail may be illustrated from William Michael Rossetti's "Breadth of Noon" by lines like

> The sky's blue almost purple, and these three
> Hills carved against it
> (from the *Germ*, Portland, Maine, 1898, p. 143).

In some cases the poet's training as a painter is connected with these qualities (cf. D. G. Rossetti and William Bell Scott); and the number of sonnets written about pictures, a favorite Pre-Raphaelite type, increases in the 1840's.

sidering, Faber, Hartley Coleridge, the De Veres, and the others.[71] Clearly it was this group, following Wordsworth's example, that established the Miltonic type of sonnet as a standard one in the nineteenth century. Their work carried the Miltonic tradition, with Wordsworthian additions and modifications, a step nearer our own times, in which it still flourishes.

* * *

The strength of the Miltonic-Wordsworthian influence may be further illustrated if we glance for a moment at a group of sonnets immune to it—the Victorian love sonnets. As was mentioned above, these were affected by the Italian and Elizabethan forces. From study of the Italians and Elizabethans sprang a conception of the sonnet as adapted primarily to the expression of love, and upon the style of the love sonnet the Elizabethan was the chief influence.

Thus Landor, an enthusiast for the Italian sonnet, thought the form "peculiarly adapted to the languor of a melancholy and despondent love" and objected to "poetasters . . . converting it into the pinfold and pound of stray thoughts and vagrant fancies,"[72] while the *Rugby Magazine* observed:

This kind of poem was not anciently used in the way it is at present. It was one especially given up to the expression of *affectionate feeling.* The almost invariable use of it by the Italian and by

[71] Anonymous article, "The Critical History of the Sonnet," *Dublin Review* n. s. 27-28 (1876-77). This was written after Rossetti's *Poems* (1870) had appeared, inspiring such praise as that of Skelton in *Fraser's Magazine* n. s. 1 (1870). 614: "Mr. Rossetti's [sonnets] are more varied, more ardent, more animated, more intellectually original than Wordsworth's." R. C. Trench's failure to mention Rossetti in his "History of the English Sonnet" is less notable, not many of Rossetti's sonnets having been published at the time that was written; but his emphasis upon H. Coleridge, Tennyson Turner, and of course Wordsworth is further evidence that this influence remained powerful. I mention D. G. Rossetti in comparison with the Miltonic-Wordsworthian group because the influence of his skilfully constructed sonnets with their distinct bipartite division was spread by an able band of sonnet critics, including Hall Caine, Theodore Watts-Dunton, and William Sharp (see the *Athenaeum*, February 20, 1886, p. 257, and April 3, 1886, pp. 452-3, for discussion of the "artistic dexterity" in handling the form achieved by later nineteenth-century sonneteers—probably learned in part from Rossetti's work). Of course the first decisive victory in the nineteenth century for an un-Miltonic and un-Wordsworthian type of sonnet was won by the popularity of E. B. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* published in 1850. Keats' work had attracted comparatively little attention.

[72] Landor, *Pentameron* in *Works,* London, 1876, 3. 472.

our own older poets gave it this character. Hence follows its musical characteristic, that is to say, not majesty or severity, but *sweetness*.[73]

The high repute of Shakespeare's sonnets, and the growing fame of the other Elizabethans imply recognition of love as one of the most legitimate of sonnet subjects. It was in the 1830's that Shakespeare's sonnets were first ranked with Milton's by the general run of critics,[74] and in the anthologies they and the other Elizabethan examples were given as much as half the space, one anthologist stating as his particular purpose the "bringing forward . . . the beautiful but neglected Sonnets of Wiat, Surry, Sidney, Drayton, Daniel, Wither, Habington, and Drummond." [75] The translations of the *Vita Nuova*,[76] too, may well have strengthened the notion that the sonnet is to be used chiefly for love; Hallam, who made some unpublished translations from that work, and in whose sonnets Italian influences are discernible,[77] favored love as a subject. In style, the love sonnets of such writers as Caroline Norton, who thought "the Shakspearian stanza a better English model than that adopted by Milton," [78] W. C. Roscoe, deeply read in the Elizabethans and not fond of Wordsworth,[79] William Rowan Hamilton, who justified his departure from the legitimate form by Shakespeare's example,[80] Thomas Wade, one of

[73] *Rugby Magazine* 1 (1835). 149.

[74] Cf. the *Rugby Magazine* quoted above; *Gentleman's Magazine* 103 pt. 1 (1833). 618; *Athenaeum*, May 2, 1835, p. 337.

[75] Woodford, *Book of Sonnets*, p. viii. Cf. Woodford's reason for printing a number of Petrarch's sonnets: "more of Petrarch's will be found . . . as he may justly be said to have been the model of our first English Sonnet writers, Wiat and Surry." But Woodford exaggerates the 'neglect' of the Elizabethans at this time and his own contribution in publishing their work. Cf. the Elizabethan sonnets in the anthologies of Dyce and Housman. Woodford does make an innovation in printing as many as thirty-nine of Spenser's *Amoretti* sonnets. Periodicals and other critics do not rate Spenser so highly at this time.

[76] C. Lyell, *The Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri* (1835); Joseph Garrow, *The Early Life of Dante Alighieri* (1846); Theodore Martin, "Dante and Beatrice," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, n.s. 12 (1845).

[77] Only half of Hallam's sonnets are legitimate, but his failure to use the concluding couplet in those, his frequent observation of the tercet division, and his use of the phrase "my lady" in referring to the one loved point to Italian influence. Furthermore, he was an excellent Italian scholar.

[78] Caroline Norton, *The Dream; and Other Poems*, New York, 1847, p. 226.

[79] See W. C. Roscoe, *Poems and Essays*, ed. R. H. Hutton, London, 1860, I. xxiv-xxvi, c.

[80] See Hamilton's letter to Wordsworth, November 17, 1831, quoted in R. P.

whose sonnets begins "Love is not love, that coldly calculates," Fanny Kemble, Rowland Williams, H. F. Lott, Edward Moxon, and W. T. Moncrieff show Elizabethan influence. Moxon's were called "modern antiques of the Elizabethan age."[81] One of Fanny Kemble's will serve as an example for most of the writers named here:

> Lady, whom my belovèd loves so well!
> When on his clasping arm thy head reclineth,
> When on thy lips his ardent kisses dwell,
> And the bright flood of burning light, that shineth
> In his dark eyes, is pourèd into thine;
> When thou shalt lie enfolded to his heart,
> In all the trusting helplessness of love;
> If in such joy sorrow can find a part,
> Oh, give one sigh unto a doom like mine!
> Which I would have thee pity, but not prove.
> One cold, calm, careless, wintry look that fell
> Haply by chance on me, is all that he
> E'er gave my love; round that, my wild thoughts dwell
> In one eternal pang of memory.[82]

Other sonnets of this Victorian love type, graceful, tender, domestic, and rarely concerned with melancholy, are by J. S. Blackie, Tennyson, Browning, Mary de Vere, the younger Aubrey de Vere, Mary St. Aubyn. Nevertheless, by 1845 it is clear that this type had not successfully challenged the Miltonic-Wordsworthian group. Moxon and William Rowan Hamilton, the latter a friend of Wordsworth's, are about as much influenced by the Lake Poet as by the Elizabethans.[83] Others, like Browning, wrote only one or a few love sonnets.[84]

Graves, *The Life of Sir William Rowman Hamilton,* London and Dublin, 1882-89. 1. 488.

[81] *Fraser's Magazine,* 8 (1833). 369.

[82] Frances Anne Kemble, *Poems,* London, 1883, p. 86.

[83] Cf. Moxon's descriptive sonnets and Hamilton's didactic and philosophical poems. Moxon addressed a sonnet to Wordsworth and dedicated the second part of his *Sonnets* (1830-35) to him.

[84] Browning's, beginning

> Eyes, calm beside thee (Lady, couldst thou know!)
> May turn away thick with fast gathering tears,

is a typical Victorian love sonnet but his only example. Of his nine later sonnets five are occasional, four humorous. Tennyson wrote ten love sonnets, several of which seem oversweet. Three were omitted from one or more editions of his poems after 1833. (It is interesting that Tennyson, in spite of his use of the legitimate form for most of his sonnets may have had some contempt for it—see William Allingham's *Diary,* ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford, London, 1907. p. 302.)

Cycles were not composed.[85] Not until the second half of the century did contemporary sonnets of an un-Miltonic and un-Wordsworthian type gain outstanding repute. That development began with the popularity of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, poems for which the Victorian love sonnet furnishes a background. Excepting Mrs. Browning's triumph of 1850, the Miltonic-Wordsworthian sonnets continued to predominate—over other types equally as much as over the love sonnets.

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[85] Disraeli's eleven sonnet stanzas in *Venetia* (1837), narrating the story of a boy and girl who loved, parted, met again and married, and the love sonnets of Hamilton and of Lady Wortley, not distinguished as groups but homogeneous enough to form such, approach most nearly the cycle form. Lady Wortley's are imbedded in her travel sonnets. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cycle stands almost alone.

VITA

George William Sanderlin was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on February 5, 1915. He attended Central High School in Washington, D. C. In September, 1931, he entered the College of Liberal Arts of the American University, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June, 1935. Since September, 1935, he has devoted all his time to his work in the Department of English of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Johns Hopkins University.